ROY MEACHUM

Viewpoint

Terrorism's new face

Terrorism wears a frightening new face this January. The dying of the old year killed the old image that only Middle Eastern faces can be suspected in Middle Eastern-connected violence. 1986 begins with revelations that native Europeans almost certainly provided the weapons used on the Rome and Vienna airports.

Belgian police arrested one of their own citizens — along with a pair of reputed Palestinians — to head off a similar threat in Brussels. A Cypriot court convicted a young Englishman for participating in the murder of three Israelis: the incident that caused the bombing of the PLO headquarters in Tunis.

At this stage, reports offer no figures on the number of non-Arabs involved in this most recent expansion of international violence; nor can anyone define with certainty the motivations for terrorism's new allies. The convicted Englishman proclaimed himself an ideologue; his identification with the Palestinian cause appears complete.

Political supporters are the easiest for law enforcement agencies to ferret out; they frequently surface before they reach the point of turning terrorists.

The human condition demands that people caught up in causes attempt to find comfort in a world which is generally apathetic, and sometimes, downright hostile. They join with other like-minded men and women. When these associations encompass any number, their presence becomes known in the community; police have the capability of assuring themselves public order is not threatened; sometimes they introduce informers into the groups.

Authorities followed the informers' route in smashing domestic European terrorist rings. Italy's Red Brigades and Germany's Bader-Meinhoff gangs once formed an unholy alliance with both Palestinian and Japanese fanatics; they all swapped information, training and weapons. Their present-day European successors have neither the organizations, nor the reach; they have not demonstrated the capability on the past scale for maintaining terrorism.

Certainly, the various European agencies are actively pursuing any links between those organizations who claim credit for domestic political violence and Palestinian extremists. However, from various sources, the impression emerges there may be no connection.

This leaves anti-terrorist forces starting from scratch. And it takes time to identify, penetrate and demolish groups that enforce self-security with the sensitivities of paranoia; this was the case with the Red Brigades. It would certainly apply to any new terrorist organization — particularly after what happened to the Red Brigades and the Bader-Meinhoff gang.

Still, in time terrorism's political supporters can be traced and caught; those who participate for profit only present a law enforcement nightmare. They could be anyone among Europe's thriving economic underground.

Illegal gun-dealing results in huge cash bonanzas: buyers are scarcely able to practice comparison shopping. Bargaining becomes an amenity that serves chiefly to enhance the brotherhood among outlaws: sellers get their price, inevitably. Weapons, drugs or unstamped cigarettes, it makes no difference: their buying and selling fall within Europe's underground

economy, supported and maintained by millions of otherwise law-abiding citizens.

The system exists despite all the best efforts of the governments in every European country whose individual tax structure would shock most Americans. The near-confiscatory rates result in the creation of an entire apparatus intent on concealing large sums of money. In addition to their own security measures, the radical Arabs' new allies would enjoy the protection of that apparatus — if profit is their single motivation.

Furthermore, the entry of new European supporters — for whatever motive — increases the danger to Americans, in this country as well as abroad. Arabs usually stand out on U.S. Main Streets; their language demands a different set of sounds that leave a distinct accent in their English. European terrorists would blend in immediately. Their chances for wreaking havoc can scarcely be imagined. U.S. Main Streets would never be the same again.

Short of this terrifying possibility, the latest extension of radical Palestinian supporters increases the probability of more attacks abroad. The deadly game has become deadlier still. A comprehensive Middle East peace would not eliminate all Arab terrorists; but their numbers would be severely reduced. In fact, the world has no choice.

Humanity simply cannot afford the prospect presented by a continuation of present attitudes and policies in the Middle East. The only sensible, humane course aims at *Peace Now!* — to borrow an Israeli slogan.